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THURSDAY, JANUARY 15, 2015

Port Colborne woman hits an instant jackpot

Page 6

Murder planned for Valentine's Day

Page 15

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Big heart on two wheels



MARYANNE
FIRTH (M)
AGENCY
NAGARA
Aubrey
Foley,
of Port
Colborne,
spends
his days
fixing up
bicycles
to give to
people in
need both
locally
and abroad.
See
story and
photo on
page 2.



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UPFRONT

■ **COMMUNITY:** Aubrey Foley has donated more than 300 bikes to people in need

It's the wheel thing

MARVYNNE FIRTH
QMI Agency Niagara

Running down the list, the resemblance is uncanny. Months spent building in his workshop? Check.

Selflessly delivering gifts around the world? Check.

That certain twinkle in his eye? Double check.

All that's missing is the big red suit.

If this were a classic holiday movie, Aubrey Foley would be the clever pseudonym used by Jolly Old St. Nick the other 364 days a year.

He may not be Santa Claus — though the jury's still out — but the Port Colborne man certainly did his part to create a little Christmas magic both locally and abroad.

From morning until the time wife Rebecca calls him in for dinner, Foley spends most days working away in his garage.

He spends hours on end repairing bicycles of all shapes and sizes, not for monetary gain but to simply give the fixed-up wheels to people in need.

This past year, the retired John Deere Welland Works supervisor and his wife gifted more than 300 bikes to families and individuals, both in Niagara and Cuba, who would otherwise be unable to afford them.

"It's like Christmas every day when you find a bike and get it ready to be handed to somebody," Foley says.

"There's no money exchanged, but the smile you receive back — I cannot explain how good that feels." That bike could be the sole transportation someone has to get to work, he says, or the simple luxury a struggling parent has been unable to provide their child.

All it takes is a call to Foley, and the bike is theirs.

"If you need a bike, we'll give you a bike. No questions asked," says the 70-year-old, who, when needed, will even deliver the gift in person.

Knowing the difficult time



Aubrey Foley, of Port Colborne, spends his days fixing up bicycles to give to people in need both locally and abroad.

MARVYNNE FIRTH/QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

many families face, Foley also offers to trade up bikes as children outgrow them.

"Bringing your wheels here. As long as it's still drivable, I'll swap it for a bigger bike," he says.

"It's simple. Bring a bike, get a bike."

Foley's projects are all self-funded, though he does receive bike donations from the community and discounts on parts from local bike shops.

He sets a budget for himself to spend on parts each month, since repairs can add up quickly.

Between tires and tubes alone, a bike in need of a little TLC can easily cost \$60 in parts, he says.

Before anyone thinks to put

an old bike at the curb or scrap it for pocket change, Foley asks that they consider donating it to the worthy cause.

Even bikes in severe condition usually have some salvageable parts that can be put to good use, he says.

Donations can be dropped off at his home, 255 Kroll St., or arrangements made by phoning 905-834-1250.

As well as being donated locally, many of the bikes make their way to Cuba, both shipped through the Dubois Charitable Foundation — an Ontario-based organization that Foley works closely with — and hand-delivered by tourists travelling from Niagara to the island nation.

While the Cuban initiatives

are near and dear to his heart, Foley says he never overlooks the need that exists in Port Colborne.

"There's just as much need in this community as there is in other parts of the world."

But for vacationers wishing to bring along a bike on their trip, all it takes is a visit to Foley who will box one up for the ride.

All it costs is the airline charge of \$34 for the extra cargo, he says.

The traveller is able to use the bike during the trip before finding a local person in need, preferably off a resort, to leave the bike with.

Foley only asks that when possible, a photo be taken of the recipient and their new set

of wheels.

It has resulted in quite the photo collection.

"If I'm ever down, I just open this drawer full of photos and the whole world changes," he says while opening a small storage area in his workbench.

Seeing the photos are by far the most rewarding part, he says.

"You couldn't give me the lotto and make me any happier."

Despite the many bikes he's sent to Cuba, Foley has only been there once about 15 years ago. He plans to return sometime early next year and will undoubtedly have board bikes ready to go.

During his visit, he hopes to shake the hand of the man

who received his very first bike donation.

"Donating is the key to our world," Foley says.

"This is a beautiful world we live in. We just have to figure out how to work together. We can't be afraid to share."

Foley makes sure no bikes he works with goes to waste.

Those that were good for little other than spare parts were donated to organizers of the Crystal Beach downtown beautification project.

The unrideable bikes were painted, decorated and placed throughout the community to brighten the day of passersby.

"I can't fix the world," Foley says.

"I just do what I can to make it a little bit better."

LOCAL NEWS

Blustery morning in Port Colborne



Canada geese take shelter from Lake Erie's gusting winds, off Gravelly Bay Friday. Pictured in the background is a laker tied up in the Welland Canal for winter.



School buses stay parked, plastered in snow, on a lot nearby H.H. Knoll Lakeview Park in Port Colborne Friday. School buses were cancelled for the day in communities along the Lake Erie shoreline.



**PHOTOS BY
ONIX FURNINGER/
ONIX AGENCY NIAGARA**
A man returns from getting a feel for how blustery conditions were along the Lake Erie shoreline in Port Colborne late Friday morning. This photo was taken at the public boat launch at H.H. Knoll Lakeview Park.

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■ I'VE BEEN THINKING

We think about God as we do tinted windows

GORD ABRAHAM

Port Colborne Baptist Church

I arrived at the intersection. I'm sitting in my car at the four-way stop. A black car arrived at exactly the same time.

Being on my right, and according to the rules of the road, he or she had the right of way. I waved the driver to proceed.

Two problems became evident. The first was that nothing happened. I waved a number of times for them to proceed. Still nothing. I suspected that as soon as I proceeded to go they might also and we would both be in the middle slamming on our brakes. So, nothing happened.

The second problem was that I couldn't see a thing in the other car. The windows in the car were so darkly tinted that I had

no idea if it was being driven remotely, was occupied by a real human being, the driver had a heart attack, was asleep, or was smiling and waving me on. I had no idea what the mystery person was doing, hidden by the tinted windows.

Instantly, I thought how much these tinted windows represent our lives. We keep our inner soul, our deep inner desires, thoughts and attitudes hidden behind dark tinted windows — we think.

"No one can really see who I am and if I can just keep people from seeing who I really am, what I think, what I've done or what I'm really like then I can be safe.

We also think the same way about God. We think we can keep out of the vision of God by covering our lives so that He cannot possibly see anything inside us — or so we think. We live behind and within our tinted windows.

The delusion with thinking and living as if we can hide from God is that there is no cover dark enough to hide us from Him. He exists in light and nothing is hidden from Him.

Have a listen to what the Scriptures say on this.

Job 12:23 "He reveals the deep things of darkness and brings utter darkness into the light."

Psalms 139:11-12 "If I say, 'Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me, even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.'

Luke 12:3 "What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs."

1 Corinthians 4:12 "wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart."

1 John 1:5 "This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all."

To confess that Christ as Lord and Master knows everything we have said and done even in hiding and to confess Him as Lord and forgiver of all, means we are free to live without tinted windows and without the fear of being exposed for who we really are. We are liberated, in our faith-union relationship with Christ; liberated to be who He intends us to be with no need for a cover-up.

Jesus said in John's Gospel, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Shipwrecks — Echo

SKIP OILLMAN

For QMI Agency Niagara

The 88.4-metre-long Dutch freighter *Echo* was built in 1961 and came through the St. Lawrence Seaway in 1968 and 1969.

It was sold later in 1969 and renamed *Euxifous*. It was registered in Ireland until 1972 when the ship was resold to French interests, converted to a fish carrier and given a third name of *Pecheur Breton*.

It moved to the Indian Ocean, with registry in Seychelles in 1985. The vessel operated for the Mahe Pêche Co. from 1990 to 1994 and was then sold to Honduran buyers who were likely working as agents for shipbreakers.

Pecheur Breton, the former *Echo*, founded on July 1, 1984. The ship was down off Galbokka Light, south of the port of Colombo, on a voyage from Seychelles to India, via Sri Lanka. The vessel had been sold for scrap after 33 years of service but cheated the shipbreakers by being lost in the Indian Ocean.

RENE BEAUCHAMP/SUPPLIED PHOTO

Echo, shown in this undated photo.


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LOCAL NEWS

■ **COURT:** Harry Gleason Leavere has been in custody since August 2013

Sentencing arguments for Tourand death on Jan. 27

GREG FURMINGER
QMI Agency Niagara

Legal arguments will be made later this month for the sentencing of Harry Gleason Leavere for his role in the August 2013 death of a 31-year-old Port Colborne woman.

Courtney Tourand was found dead in Leavere's Port Colborne apartment at 282 West St. shortly after 3 a.m.



**COURTNEY
TOURAND**

On Aug. 27 that year, Niagara Regional Police at the time said she had been dead for three days to a week.

Her obituary listed her date of death as Aug. 22.

In Ontario Court of Justice in Welland last Thursday, Leavere returned to the prisoner's box again wearing loose-fitting black pants and a blue dress shirt.

During his brief morning appearance, both his defence counsel and the Crown attorney agreed with Judge Tony Colvin to reconvene Jan. 27 at 9:30 a.m. to present sentencing recommendations.

Crown counsel Graeme

Leach said both legal teams have agreed to exchange final case law books a week before that date.

Originally charged with second-degree murder and offering indignity to a body, Leavere struck a plea deal to manslaughter in November, defence lawyer Noah Schachter said earlier this month. The initial charges against the Port Colborne man have been dropped.

Leavere, who at the time of his arrest was 44, was taken into custody in Hamilton about 12 hours after Tourand had been found by police. He has remained in custody since

then.

Tourand was the common-law partner of Derek Reid.

The couple met when they were students at E.L. Crossley Secondary School in Pelham.

They had been together for 18 years and moved to their Port Colborne home in 2011.

■ **SHIPPING**

Dry docks gets lease for Algoma work

DON FRASER
QMI Agency Niagara

Algoma Central Corp. has entered into a three-month lease at the Port Weller dry docks.

Maintenance work is being done on the Algoma Enterprise, which is required every five years, said Algoma's chief financial officer Peter Winkey.

"We are doing work on the Enterprise and it's our own folks doing that work," he said. "It's only over that short period this winter ... we're hoping to have it complete by the end of March."

He said some workers handling the project on the bulk carrier are seasonal and hired every winter.

The previous dry docks tenant, Seaway Marine and Industrial, went bankrupt in

2013, throwing more than 100 people out of work.

Winkey said his company has no intention "at this time" of a longer or more permanent lease at the dry docks.

Kyle Groulx, a business representative for International Brotherhood of Boilermakers Local 128 representing the hourly workers, said many have since found work. Some are also currently working on the project as seasonal workers.

"We are ... looking at a few things (about the current lease) from a legal standpoint," he said. "We're looking as to whether there are grounds for a successor employer claim."

Any such claim would pertain to whether or not the Steelworkers have the right to represent workers there.

"We would file and say that it should be done under our

collective agreement," Groulx said.

Bruce Hodgson, director of market development at the Seaway, said the corporation is open to discussion for longer leases at the dry docks but there's nothing yet on deck.

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JULIE JOCKMAC/QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

The Algoma Enterprise is parked at the Port Weller dry docks.

IN BRIEF

\$50,000 lottery winner from Port

A Port Colborne woman is \$50,000 richer after winning the top prize on an Instant Crossword ticket.

Indoor, Freeway, Snowy and Thaw were only some of the words that nettled Rose Aggro her payday.

The winning ticket was purchased at Shoppers Drug Mart on South Pelham Rd. in Welland.

Ice safety warning issued

The ice may look safe for skating, but to test it could be hazardous to your health.

Welland Recreational Canal Corp. issued a safety warning Tuesday.

With the sudden plummeting of temperatures and ice forming on local waterways, people will be looking to expand their recreational activities out and around the ice. Be cautioned that ice that looks safe may very well not be safe and be too thin for recreational purposes.

With many factors

affecting ice thickness and the unpredictability of water and weather conditions, there is no sure way to guarantee the safety or thickness of ice.

The best way to stay safe? Stay off the ice.

WRCC is also reminding people — road, snowmobilers — that unauthorized use of motorized vehicles is prohibited on the waterway at all times, frozen or not.

Women's Place seeks directors

Women's Place of South Niagara is recruiting members for its board of directors.

The organization that provides shelter and counselling for women and their children in distress put out a call for applications Tuesday. Board members are appointed to two year terms with an option to renew for another two years and are responsible for the governance and strategic direction of Women's Place, and meet monthly.

The organization is looking for people with experience with not-for-profit organizations, skilled in organizational management, human resources, fundraising and government relations or advocacy.

Those who are interested should call Women's Place at 905-536-2033 ext. 239. For more information visit www.womensplace.org.

Police campaign focuses on road safety

Niagara Regional Police are readying to launch Operation Multi-Task.

Officers will soon begin the three-month road safety operation designed to address drivers who continue to speed, drive impaired, drive while distracted, fail to follow the rules of the road and refuse to clear snow from their vehicles.

The initiative will be underway around the clock and operate with both marked and unmarked police vehicles.

Officers will be issuing provincial offence notices to drivers who put others at risk by engaging in high-risk activities on the roadway.

Operation Multi-Task continues the NRP's commitment to making roads throughout Niagara safer through education and enforcement campaigns.

Trivia night supports youths

Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Niagara is hosting its annual Trivia Night: Play for Kids' Save! on Saturday, Jan. 17 at Casa Dante at 34 Lincoln St. in Welland. Tickets are \$20 each and include trivia, pizza and prizes. Tables of eight and 10 are available, as well as a cash bar.

Doors open at 5 p.m. with trivia getting underway at 7 p.m. The evening supports the organization's mentoring

programs for youths of south Niagara.

For more information or to register a team, visit: www.bbbsin Niagara.ca, call 905-735-0570 ext. 226 or e-mail admin@southniagara.ca, bigbrothersbigistersa.ca.

Ball hockey aids homeless

Play ball hockey and help homelessness.

Niagara Region will host its annual ball hockey tournament on Jan. 31, in support of local homelessness programs.

The tournament will start at 10:30 a.m., at the BallHockey.com Athletic Centre, 16 Melbourne Ave., St. Catharines. Entry fee is \$20 a player.

Teams can register until Jan. 23.

More information can be found at www.niagara-region.ca/ballhockey.

Proceeds will support programs provided by The Hope Centre, Community Care of St. Catharines and Thorold, Project SHARE, Port Cares, Grimsby Affordable Housing Partnership, Hannah House and theYWCA of Niagara.

Maves elected region's public works chair

The first order of business for the initial public works committee meeting of the new regional council was to select a chair. Niagara Falls Councillor Bart Maves was the overwhelming choice of committee members, defeating

St. Catharines Coun. Tim Rigby by an 18-4 vote. Rigby served as chair of the committee during the last term.

Rigby went down to defeat again in a vote for vice-chair, losing to rookie councillor Tony Quirk of Grimsby 16-6.

Wellfield Mayor April Jeffs and West Lincoln Mayor Doug Joyner were elected co-chairs of the public health and social services committee, defeating Thorold Coun. Henry D'Angelo and Pelham Coun. Brian Bety respectively, in identical 11-10 votes.

The chairs of standing committees served a annual stipend of \$2,000.

5 arrested in Port Colborne drug bust

Five Port Colborne residents were arrested last Thursday following an investigation into the sale of crystal methamphetamine in Port Colborne's east village.

Niagara Regional Police arrested three parties who were allegedly involved in the transaction of the drug in a secluded parking lot on Hwy. 3 between Port Colborne and Fort Erie.

As a result, a search warrant was then executed on a Mitchell St. apartment, where police seized a small amount of suspected crystal meth, about \$475 in cash and a large amount of stolen property, including bicycles, electronics, jewelry and power tools.

The stolen property is believed

to be valued at more than \$5,000.

Bradley Jackson, 27, is charged with possession of a controlled substance for the purpose of trafficking, possession of stolen property over \$5,000, possession of proceeds of crime obtained by crime under \$5,000 and breach of probation.

Robert Gagne, 26, is charged with possession of a controlled substance for the purpose of trafficking, possession of stolen property over \$5,000, possession of proceeds of crime obtained by crime under \$5,000, trafficking in a controlled substance, and two counts of breach of probation.

Dylan Morin, 23, is charged with possession of a controlled substance for the purpose of trafficking, possession of stolen property over \$5,000 and breach of probation.

Ryan Chic, 27, is charged with trafficking in a controlled substance.

Tyler Fenton, 26, is charged with possession of a controlled substance.

Ecstasy seized in Port Colborne

A Port Colborne drug investigation led to one arrest and the seizure of cocaine and MDMA, also known as ecstasy, last Friday.

This month, the Niagara Regional Police Welland street crime unit and G District uniform patrol are investigating the sale of cocaine in licensed establishments within the lakeside city.

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Sir John Colborne
Annual General Meeting

Date: January 19, 2015

Time: 7:00pm

Location: Fontaine Transport
72 Killaly Street East
Port Colborne

To continue the success of the soccer club, board members and volunteers are wanted.

Any correspondence to be read at the meeting is to be received by Friday January 16, 2015.

Dr. Andrew W Taylor
M.D. F.R.C.S.C., Dip. A.B.O.

LOCAL NEWS

■ COLUMN: Tony's Desk

Parking tickets from a private company are different

Don't take any legal advice from me, but if you happen to get a parking ticket at one of the local hospitals or at an apartment complex in your city, don't be in such a rush to pay it until you know all the facts.

A bit of work might be involved, but there's a good chance it will save you some, or possibly all, of your money.

I had no idea about this issue until Loretta Morrissey, a friend of mine from years ago, brought it to my attention. She received a ticket for \$49 after dropping off a family member at the emergency department of the Greater Niagara General Hospital.

Loretta has a valid disability permit on the dash of her vehicle, which allows her to park in a designated handicap parking spot anywhere in the city without having to pay any meter or parking machine.

She thought the ticket was unfair and declined to pay it. But, what was even more important to her is that people be informed when it comes to these types of tickets because they are issued by a private company.

The rules are slightly different when it comes down to fighting or challenging a ticket that is issued by police or a bylaw enforcement officer, and one



MIKE ORBATISTA/QUI AGENCY NIAGARA

Private companies looking after parking lots at hospitals, commercial properties and apartment buildings have different rules that govern what happens when someone fails to pay these tickets. Some residents have found they can get away without paying the tickets because it's too costly to take them to small claims court.

that is issued by a private company.

After making numerous phone calls, and going back and forth with emails trying to find out what is the process if someone decides they want to fight one of these private tickets in court, it turns out they don't take people to court.

That seems strange because the accused person doesn't even get a chance to tell their side of the story, to an independent judge or justice of the peace,

and have that person decide their guilt or innocence.

If you wish to dispute a parking ticket from a private company, there's an address on the back of the ticket where you can send that information.

Apparently, they have a panel that reviews your information and they decide whether the ticket stands, or if they are willing to reduce the amount, or if they are willing to void it.

That doesn't seem very democratic. What gives a private

company the right to be your judge, your jury and your executioner?

What happened to our basic democratic right of being innocent until proven guilty?

A parking ticket is nothing more than an allegation that is made by one side, against another party, that they did something wrong.

Nothing has been proven. After getting a parking ticket, most people are usually upset, but they end up paying

it because it's usually not very much and it would take more time and effort to try and fight it. It's not financially feasible to take the day off work and go to court to fight a \$20 or \$50 ticket, or to even hire a paralegal or a lawyer. It's cost prohibitive.

While that can work against you when trying to prove your innocence, that can work for you when a private company is trying to prove you are guilty.

It's also cost prohibitive for a private company to take some-

one to small claims court because there are fees that need to be paid to start that action, and they would also have to hire a paralegal or lawyer to present that case, let alone making sure they have all their witnesses ready to testify, including the person who actually wrote that ticket.

I was almost tempted to get a parking ticket at the hospital and rip it up just to prove that nothing happens once you get one of these.

I decided against it after having a long discussion about this issue with lawyers Ronald Charlebois and Brenda Sandulak.

While a private company is not likely to take someone to court because of the costs, they might wish to make an example out of me if I made such a statement.

Charlebois and Sandulak also explained the problems someone might have if that unpaid parking ticket is handed over to the credit bureau and ends up on your credit history.

So, as I said earlier, don't take any legal advice from me, but Charlebois joked that if he ever gets one of these tickets I have spent so much time researching this topic that he is going to give me a call.

He didn't charge me for his legal advice, so it's only fair that I don't charge him for my two cents.

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■ MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS: Criticism of green energy deal to sell electricity to province

Gale says councillors 'prostitutes for money'

ROB HOULE
QMI Agency Niagara

Cashing in on a program that acknowledges is bad for all provincial taxpayers makes regional politicians "prostitutes for the money," councillors say.

Niagara Region's corporate services commissioner endorsed a plan last Wednesday that would see the regional government enter into MicroFIT agreements with the province to sell it electricity generated from solar panel installations on 16 regional buildings.

A staff report says the region can expect its \$553,000 outlay for the installation to yield "an average return on investment of 8% over the 20-year agreements with a nine-year payback period."

While the anticipated profit was acknowledged as a solid investment for Niagara, many regional councillors were critical of MicroFIT and the Green Energy Act, which they blamed for skyrocketing electricity bills.

Niagara Falls Coun. Rob Gale was frustrated the Region was in a position to gain from a program he and others noted generates excess electricity that's being sold at a loss in New York State, where discounted electricity is used as bait to lure industry there.

"The common denominator is, I'll vote for this, but..." We all know what's wrong," Gale said. "I'm new at this, but I see that we've got a waste here of money that we're all paying into, it's gone on for years and no one's going to complain, but everybody is going to jump on this."

"This is so wrong it's funny. I'm going to support it like everybody else, but we're all prostitutes for the money."

St. Catharines Coun. Bruce

Timmins said, "I will support the program. It's obvious we have to take advantage of it, because others will if we don't."

"If we don't make our best efforts to take advantage of it, we'd just be paying out of both pockets. This way, something does come back to the regional taxpayer, even if you're ditching it out on your hybrid bill."

Wainfleet Mayor April Jeffs said, "I'm struggling with this one, because I do see the financial benefit to the region. But I'm concerned, I just had a constituent set up an appointment with me to discuss what the township and the Region are doing to address the increasing hydro rates, and then here we sit today. So it's a bit of a conundrum."

Fort Erie Coun. Sandy Annunziata said the Green Energy Act was not good for the province as a whole, but was supportive of the Region's solar projects because of the return on investment.

"From an economic perspective, the global adjustment rate that subsidizes these kind of projects is costing Ontario jobs and economic prosperity," Annunziata said.

Grimby Coun. Tony Quirk echoed Annunziata.

"I'll be supporting this report because I think it's a good thing for the region. I think globally it's been a bit of a disaster for the taxpayer."

Thorold Coun. Henry D'Angella, who has solar panels installed on the roof of his home, said "this is something I've been pushing here for the last three years."

He said taking advantage of the province's MicroFIT program was "thinking outside the box in

BARRICK CHAIR

Prior to the first corporate services committee meeting of the new council, Port Colborne Coun. David Barrick was elected chair, beating Pelham Mayor Dave Augustin in a 15-6 vote. St. Catharines Coun. Andy Petrowski was voted vice chair, defeating Augustin 13-7.

A motion presented by Niagara Falls Coun. Selina Volpatti asking that the committee have co-chairs was passed, meaning Petrowski, upon approval by regional council, will become co-chair.

The chairs of standing committees receive an annual stipend of \$2,000.

terms of generating revenue. If we don't take advantage of this program, there's someone else in Ontario that will."

Gale later retracted the "prostitute" comment, following an objection from D'Angella.

"I apologize. But we're doing it for the money, and that's what it comes out to be."

Committee chair David Barrick said the role of regional government is to do what is best for Niagara residents.

"I know, as mentioned by several of the councillors, the issues with the province on this policy. But I think we need to put that aside and deal with the issue at hand," he said.

Committee members voted 14-6 to enter into the MicroFIT deals, which still require approval from regional council.

■ MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

Councillor apologizes to police chief

ROB HOULE
QMI Agency Niagara

Apology extended, apology accepted.

Regional councillor Andy Petrowski last Wednesday said he was sorry to Niagara Regional Police Chief Jeff McGuire for comments the St. Catharines politician made in an e-mail that was copied to a number of other people.

"I would like to offer a full and complete apology for, and retraction of, my e-mail dated Sept. 9, 2014," Petrowski wrote in an e-mail to McGuire that was obtained by QMI Agency Niagara.

The e-mail was copied to regional politicians, NRP deputy chiefs and Niagara Regional Police services board members.

"The e-mail was inappropriate and was conveyed in an entirely unacceptable manner. I retract the e-mail and also agree that all recipients on that original e-mail be advised of this."

Petrowski went on to ask that McGuire withdraw a complaint about the original e-mail that filed with Niagara Region integrity commissioner George Rust D'Eye on Sept. 25.

The police chief was quick to reply, in an e-mail also obtained by QMI Agency Niagara.

"Councillor Petrowski, be advised that I accept your apology and retraction and now consider the matter to be closed," McGuire wrote.

Regional councillors recently elected Petrowski as one of three region rep-

resentatives to the police services board, a fact he said Wednesday afternoon had some bearing on his decision to apologize.

While he said he didn't think McGuire's complaint needed to be filed, "I could have probably approached my issue differently. I want to move on, start the police board term with a clean slate."

Petrowski — who has been the subject of a handful of integrity commissioner complaints, all of which were dismissed with the exception of one the commissioner said was not within his purview — said the apology was also offered to save taxpayer dollars.

"I believe it's more important to stop wasting tax dollars on an integrity commissioner report and enter the police board term with a clean slate," Petrowski said.

"I believe an apology would accomplish two things — it would stop the integrity commissioner, and would also probably create a cleaner slate for me to start the new term of police board."

A telephone voicemail left with McGuire was not returned.

However, the chief did comment in an e-mail to QMI Agency Niagara.

"I have accepted the apology and retraction and all recipients of the original e-mail will be provided a copy of today's apology and retraction," McGuire wrote.

"I am in the process of notifying the integrity commissioner that I am withdrawing my complaint, having received the apology and retraction. We both agree that the matter is now closed and I will not be making any

further comment on this."

Petrowski would not discuss the e-mail that was subject of the complaint when first contacted mid-afternoon Wednesday. However, a copy of it was obtained by QMI Agency Niagara later that afternoon.

The e-mail in question is among a chain of messages that was started by a Niagara resident asking regional councillors to publicly give their opinion regarding an NRP officer who pleaded guilty to assaulting a photographer in 2012 but was still a member of the police service.

Follow-up e-mails eventually included the police chief, who told the resident due process had been followed regarding the officer in question.

In one of the e-mails in the chain that followed, Petrowski wrote to the resident and accused McGuire of interfering "behind the scenes with an important in-camera decision which has been ratified by regional council."

That comment was the basis for McGuire's complaint.

Reached early Wednesday night, Petrowski would not offer much further comment.

"I have to pass. Like the chief says, from my point of view the case is closed, I am not comfortable with the apology I made and I want to move on," Petrowski said.

"I think there's integrity moving forward, past this issue, and not discussing the specifics of the chief's complaint any further."

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LOCAL NEWS

■ **GAS PRICES:** Cheaper fuel has drivers filling up closer to home

Getting relief at the pumps

ALISON LANGLEY
OMI Agency Niagara

With gas prices sitting below \$1 a litre across the region, the long-standing tradition of filling up south of the border is starting to lose its appeal.

"It's not worth the effort because you're not going to save anything," said Dan McTeague, a senior petroleum analyst for the price-tracking website Gasbuddy.com.

On Saturday, the average price in Niagara Falls, Ont., was 88.8 cents a litre. In Niagara Falls, N.Y., the price was an average of US\$2.72 per gallon, the equivalent of CDN87.6 cents a litre.

Add the bridge toll and the exchange rate if paying by credit card and the end result is "there is no deal" to buy gas over the border, McTeague said.

Jessica Friesen, CEO of Niagara-based Gales Fuels, added: "By the time you factor in your time going over the border and taking into consideration where the Canadian dollar is right now and where the gas prices are right now, it makes sense to me to stay here."

Friesen said she's noticed an increase in customers as prices continue to fall.

"It hasn't been extravagant, but definitely I'm seeing a positive change in what's happening out there," she said.

In recent months, crude oil prices have fallen drastically, contributing to a surplus supply with record production levels.

"The prices are reflecting, for the first time in over 10 years, the fundamentals of supply and demand," said McTeague.

"The world is producing 2.5 million barrels of oil that it can't possibly use every day. There's no end of sellers, just not enough takers."

McTeague, a former Liberal MP, expects prices to stay consistent in the

foreseeable future.

"I don't see things going down any time soon."

Despite the savings, some motorists continue to cross the border to fill up.

"I still go over occasionally because I think I still get a better deal because I pick up a few groceries as well," said John Cuviglio, who stopped at a McLeod Rd. gas station on Saturday.

Drivers are pleased with what they're seeing at the pumps.

"It is nice to have a little extra money in your pocket after you fill up," said Sherri Vanguard as she filled up her

minivan at the same gas station.

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GAS PRICES

Average price per litre Jan. 10, 2015: 88.8 cents
Average price per litre Jan. 10, 2014: \$123.2

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LOCAL NEWS



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Lincoln County Humane Society's Britney Boston and Tribune reporter Maryanne Firth look over Paddy, a four-year-old shih tzu poodle that was on the debut webisode of The Adoptables, Wednesday. Paddy and Freddy, a second dog that was on the show, were both adopted within hours of the program launch. The full episode is available to watch on the three Niagara daily newspaper websites. New episodes will air every week.

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■ BREWERIES

Glass half empty on Beer Store announcement

KARENA WALTER
QMI Agency Niagara

Craft breweries in Niagara had more questions on tap than answers last Wednesday about The Beer Store's surprise announcement it will open ownership to all Ontario brewer-

ies. The announcement — which comes after repeated criticisms of the private, foreign-owned Beer Store's near-monopoly — was "out of left field," said one brewer. "It is a complete and utter surprise to us," said Matthew Swan,

co-owner of Silversmith Brewing Co. in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

"A whole lot of details would need to be worked out."

The Beer Store said Wednesday that small Ontario brewers will be allowed to stock two of their products at the five Beer Store loca-

tions closest to their brewery for free.

They will also be able to stock those two products at other stores beyond the closest five for a reduced listing fee.

The company's shareholder agreement is also changing, allowing breweries with Beer Store sales under five million litres a year to get a preferred share in the company for \$100. Those breweries with sales over five million litres a year will pay \$1,000 for a preferred share.

The Beer Store is owned by three multinationals — Anheuser-Busch, Molson Coors and Sapporo.

"As a result of these changes all Ontario brewers will be able to participate in the management of the company and the smallest Ontario brewers will get improved opportunities to grow their sales volumes at a significantly reduced cost," Beer Store president Ted Moroz said in a statement.

The three current owners of the Beer Store will continue to dominate the new board, holding 12 of the 15 seats.

Silversmith's Swan said the announcement doesn't address the biggest issue on the table for small breweries — getting beer into the hands of consumers in an equitable way.

He said Ontario's system is a dinosaur and the province's decision to grant multinationals a monopoly to sell beer is baffling.

"Our major competitors are the largest multinational beer companies in the world who own The Beer Store, so there are still some issues that would have to be worked out for our ideal situation to arise," Swan said.

"It's out of left field, and not a lot of information."

Cian MacNeill of Niagara Oast House Brewery in Niagara-on-the-Lake said craft breweries want to see a fundamental change in the way Ontario distributes beer.

The announcement, which he said "blindsided" them, is far from that.

"It might be a small step in the right direction, but we would certainly like as much freedom to reach our market as is entitled to the big guys," MacNeill said. The idea of being able to put their product in the five closest Beer Stores for no listing fees could be a benefit to a rural brewery like Oast in reaching urban areas of Niagara, he said.

Ideally, he said, craft breweries would like their products showcased the way they want in the markets they want to be in — instead of another group controlling how much they can bring in and how it is displayed.

Rod Dalgle, co-owner of Brimstone Brewing Co. in Ridgeway, said he was skeptical of the announcement.

"My initial gut reaction is it's a little bit knee-jerk and it may very well be designed to quell complaints from brewers in the province by giving them ownership," said Dalgle.

"It's been heating up a lot over the last six months or so, and suddenly there's this announcement. So I'm a little bit skeptical."

Dalgle said Brimstone, opened in 2013, hasn't been in the position to approach The Beer Store because of volume and pricing requirements. If those requirements change, he said, they would be happy to look at it because the brewery is in a growing phase.

"We'd welcome as many avenues as possible to get our beer out to the public."

Currently, most craft breweries sell their beer at their breweries, in bars and restaurants and in some cases at the LCBO.

Local brewers echoed the association Ontario Craft Brewers, which said in a statement the announcement came as a "complete surprise" to its members.

Association chair Can Heaps said in a press release the association was not consulted by The Beer Store.

"Our goal continues to be fundamental change to Ontario's beer distribution channel that will result in a doubling or tripling of the jobs currently created by the craft brewers as well as the ability to reach our share of market potential," he said in a statement.

The announcement comes in the wake of increased criticism about The Beer Store.

In August, the C.D. Howe Institute report *Uncorking a Strange Beer: The Need for More Competition in Ontario's Alcoholic Beverage Retailing System*, recommended the province eliminate "The Beer Store's quasi-monopoly."

An expert panel reviewing Ontario government assets, meanwhile, recommended last fall the private sector monopoly be left in place to maintain a cost-effective delivery system, but that craft breweries be given greater opportunities to expand their business.

Susie Heath, a spokeswoman for Finance Minister Charles Sousa, said the government asset advisory council will continue looking at the LCBO and Beer Store.

"The advisory council will consider this announcement in the context of its work," Heath said in an e-mail.

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— Niagara Public Health

Niagara under attack from flu

BOB TYMCZYSZYN
QMI Agency Niagara

If you've got a headache, chills and cough, you might be seeing the first symptoms of the flu.

The seasonal ailment is making its way through the province and Niagara is not immune.

The flu will likely hit its peak in the next week or two, said Jennifer Sharron, manager for the Infectious Diseases program with Niagara Public Health.

"When we look at our surveillance reports, we can see that in the Golden Horseshoe is right in the midst of widespread influenza," she said. "In Niagara, we're almost there."

"The numbers that are being reported show that it is just at the cusp of being at its peak. We are very close to it. I wouldn't be surprised if the next report in the next week or two says that we are at our peak."

According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, influenza, or the flu, infects millions of Canadians every year. The highly contagious infectious respiratory disease begins in the nose and throat, and can spread rapidly from person to person.

Influenza cases result in approximately 12,200 hospitalizations and on average, 3,500 deaths in Canadians each year.

This year, the H3N2 influenza has been the most common strain circulating in North America. People 65 and older are usually the most affected by the H3 flu type.

While health professionals admit there is a mismatch with the flu vaccine this year, they still suggest people get the vaccine.

"The vaccine has proven to provide some cross protection against the current strain," said Sharron. "And it can prevent the symptoms from being severe. It does cover some other strains, and who's to say next month that we may see influenza B coming and we know there's a match for that."

"Hospitals are seeing the patient demand pressures in their emergency departments, with patients showing influenza-like symptoms," said Sharron. "Signs to look for are the sudden onset of illness and fever, extreme weariness and achiness, headache and chills — these are all good signs that this is not a regular cold," said Sharron.

"If you're sick with flu symptoms, you should just stay home and avoid contact with other people, except to get medical care."

For certain people who are at high risk with flu-related complications, it's better to contact their family doctor and get directions from them, she added.

She said residents should feel free to call the Niagara public health department with questions or queries about vaccinations. It can be reached at 905-888-8248 ext. 7425.

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FOOD: Celebrity chef praises Niagara

Chef Michael Smith packs 'em in at festival

BOB TYMCZYSZYN
QMI Agency Niagara

Chef Michael Smith had a message for his listeners Sunday on the last day of the Twenty Valley Winter Winefest in downtown Jordan.

"Cooking for yourself is dead easy," he said.

"Just make that commitment." The celebrity chef, TV show host and author is no stranger to the Niagara culinary scene, recalling visiting Chef Michael Olson at On The Twenty some 20 years ago.

Since then, Smith has made many trips preparing meals at Brock University and visiting the culinary program at Niagara College.

"Niagara, without question, is the heartland, one of the centres of food and wine in Canada," he said. "It looms large, it's a place to come get inspired and have fun."

"There are few places in the world that sit so comfortably at the intersection of food and wine. It's an easy place to cook, to look around and find great local ingredients. The momentum has been building for so many years, the rest is the world is jumping on this bandwagon."

Asked about the local wines, he praised the region for the great progress the wines have been making.

Smith said every other bottle he has is from Canada.

"They are world class, particularly in this region," he said. He also praised the event in Jordan. Smith prepared a sold-out dinner Saturday night and Sunday's brunch was also sold out.

"I think it's great as Canadians we put something on like this, and that people will people show up," he said. Doffing his Canada Goose coat for the autograph and book-signing, he offered up one tip for those home cooks.

"Just relax, take it easy. We put too much pressure on ourselves in home kitchens," he said.

He said he has zero tolerance for processed food.

"I understand it, but it is bankrupting our health-care system," he said.

"To put it all in perspective, as human beings we've cooked for ourselves for 100,000 generations. It's only the last two where we've lost our way."

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LOCAL NEWS

■ THEATRE: Canalside Players host mystery fundraiser dinner

Valentine's Day script calls for murder

MARYANNE FIRTH
QMI Agency Niagara

Canalside Players want to offer up a different type of outing for Valentine's Day — dinner with a side of murder.

The community theatre group, run in conjunction with the City of Welland, is hosting a murder mystery dinner Saturday, Feb. 14.

Love Is Murder, written and directed by the group's artistic director Lee Moffatt, introduces the audience to a seedy late-night lounge and exposes them to the many characters found within.

"It has action, it has music — a little bit of everything," Moffatt said of the show, which goes hand in hand with a catered dinner.

Canalside Players chair Jeff

Elling described the production as "very interactive" with actors sitting at tables in the crowd.

"Everyone is a suspect, even the audience," Moffatt said, adding that only increases the fun of the evening.

Diners will make notes throughout the evening, tracking clues and trying to determine who the culprit is. Before the murderer is revealed, the guesses will be collected and prizes handed out later.

The three-hour show provides a different option for anyone looking for a romantic but fun evening out for Valentine's Day, Moffatt said.

"It's better than just going to a restaurant for dinner. It's interactive, exciting and you



MARYANNE FIRTH/QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

Canalside Players chair Jeff Elling and artistic director Lee Moffatt jokingly act out a scene while discussing the group's upcoming murder mystery fundraising event set for Feb. 14.

can still spend time with your significant other."

The murder mystery acts as a fundraiser for the theatre group's two shows planned for

2015, including a spring production of Neil Simon's *Last of the Red Hot Lovers*.

While the city does help to fund the group, more money

is needed to assist with the cost of props, sets and licensing fees, Moffatt said.

The murder mystery takes place in the atrium of Welland

Community Wellness Complex. Doors open at 5:30 p.m., followed by the performance at 6. A cash bar will be available.

Tickets, available at the wellness complex, cost \$33 for wellness passholders and \$35 for everyone else if purchased by Jan. 31.

Tickets purchased between Feb. 1 and Feb. 7, the last day to buy, cost \$37 for pushholders and \$40 for everyone else.

Auditions for the Canalside Players' spring production will get underway at the end of February.

For updates, visit www.facebook.com/Canalside-PlayersWelland.

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IMPORT NEWS ■ THURSDAY, JANUARY 15, 2015

■ **ENTERTAINMENT:** Politicians bid to bring The Tonight Show to Niagara Falls



Jimmy Fallon and Nicole Kidman discussed, among other things, New Year's Eve in Niagara Falls during The Tonight Show. Kidman's husband Keith Urban headlined the show at Queen Victoria Park.

Mayors extend invite to Jimmy Fallon

ALISON LANGLEY
QMI Agency Niagara

The mayors of Niagara Falls want to turn lemons into lemonade.

Niagara Falls, N.Y., Mayor Paul Dyster and Niagara Falls, Ont., Mayor Jim Diodati plan to extend a personal invitation to *Tonight Show* host Jimmy Fallon to visit the border towns after the entertainer made some disparaging remarks about the U.S. side during a recent show.

"The New York side is almost like a Lemony Snicket book cover. Sad and trees with no leaves on it. And you go, 'What happened? Why is that side so much worse?'" asked Fallon, during an interview with Nicole Kidman.

In contrast, he referred to the Canadian side as "lights and fun."

Kidman appeared on the *Tonight Show* Jan. 6, less than a week after her husband, concert star Keith Urban, headlined Niagara's New Year's Eve concert.

While Fallon's comments angered many residents stateside, the mayors on both sides of the border hope to use the controversy to their advantage.

Both mayors will send out a joint invitation to Fallon this week, invit-

ing him to come and experience what both cities have to offer.

"We saw a window of opportunity open up so we're going to try to see if we can turn a little lemon into lemonade," Diodati said.

"We like to refer to both Niagara Falls as one city divided by a river, so we're going to send a collaborative letter to him inviting him to come down and have some fun."

Ideally, Diodati hopes Fallon will film a segment or an entire show in Niagara.

"We are the playground of western New York and southern Ontario," he added. "We offer a buffet of fun and entertainment and, Jimmy, this is the place you want to come to feast on fun."

Diodati on Friday turned to Twitter to invite Fallon to the region using the hashtag #tonightinnagarafalls.

He is encouraging residents to retweet his invite and to also post messages on the NBC website and Fallon's Facebook page.

Dyster could not be reached for comment.

alison.langleys@summedia.ca
Twitter: @tinfalingley

■ **JUNE 2015:** Baywatch, Knight Rider star confirmed

The Hoff heading to Comic Con

JOHN LAW
QMI Agency Niagara

Niagara Falls will get two days of The Hoff this June.

David Hasselhoff, the star of two iconic TV shows, has been booked for the fifth annual Niagara Falls Comic Con. The 62-year-old actor/singer will appear June 6 and 7 at the Scotiabank Convention Centre.

Hasselhoff first made his mark on the 1980s action series *Knight Rider* before hitting the beach for *Baywatch*.

Originally a failure on NBC, *Baywatch* was revived by Hasselhoff for the syndication market, where it was eventually shown in 140 countries. According to the Guinness Book of World Records, it is still the most watched TV show of all time at 1.1 billion viewers.

In a lucrative side career, Hasselhoff was also a popular singer in Europe, enjoying huge chart success in Germany.

"Acting, singing and producing, you

name it, he's done it all," says Niagara Falls Comic Con show producer Chris Dabrowski.

Hasselhoff has also appeared in the films *Click*, *Dodgeball*, *Piranha 3D*, *The SpongeBob SquarePants Movie* and the upcoming *Ted 2*.

Before Samuel L. Jackson took over the role, he was also Marvel's *Nick Fury* for a 1998 movie.

In recent years he has been on reality shows *Dancing With the Stars* and *Britain's Got Talent*.

Comic Con will run June 5 to 7. Among the confirmed celebrities are Yvonne Craig (Bartel), Linda Biele, Billy Dee Williams, Elvira, Margot Kidder, Luke Perry and Manu Bennett. Comic book artists include Darwyn Cooke, Phil Hester and creator of *The Crow*, James O'Barr.

Tickets range from \$25 to \$35, or \$70 for a three-day pass. Visit www.nagarafallscomiccon.com

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